

## Notes on the status and behaviour of the Rusty-necked Piculet *Picumnus fuscus*

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The Rusty-necked Piculet *Picumnus fuscus* is a small woodpecker known from fewer than 10 specimens collected along the middle Rio Guaporé (or Río Iténez) of Brazil/Bolivia. Because there is apparently no published information on its status and behaviour, we here report recent observations from eastern Bolivia.

On 21 August 1990, during an avifaunal survey of lowland forests of eastern Departamento Beni, Parker and Rocha found this piculet to be fairly common in seasonally flooded forests along the Rio Guaporé/Iténez in the vicinity of Versalles, a small Bolivian village on the west bank of the river. We first found a pair with a canopy mixed flock of woodcreepers, formicariids and other small insectivores (e.g. *Sittasomus griseicapillus*, *Xiphorhynchus picus*, *Xenops tenuirostris*, *Pygiptila stellaris*, *Myrmotherula assimilis*, *M. axillaris* and *M. menetriesii*) that foraged at 10–16 m in the viny canopy of stunted river-edge forest on the Brazilian side of the river. The piculets hopped quickly along slender vinelets and dead branchlets, tapping vigorously as if to dislodge small insects from the bark. Later, we watched a family of 4 (perhaps 5) *P. fuscus* as they foraged in tangles of slender, spineless bamboo stalks and vines in the understory and at mid-heights 2–5 m above ground in the same forest. The male sang regularly and responded strongly to playbacks by flying to within 2 m of us and rocking up and down on its perch. Male song was a series of 4–5 thin but protracted *seet* notes. The female sang a similar but shorter song. All individuals in the group uttered soft *psit* notes while foraging. Tape-recordings of these vocalizations are housed in the Library of Natural Sounds, Cornell University (Ithaca, New York). The primary song of *Picumnus fuscus* is very like that of *Picumnus aurifrons borbae*, which we thought we heard in high-ground forest west of Versalles. We also heard *P. fuscus* in a small area of flooded forest on the Bolivian side of the river, c. 500 m south of the village. From water marks on the trees on both sides of the river, we assume that *P. fuscus* habitat is inundated by up to 2 m of water during the wet season. A variety of other flooded forest species were observed in this habitat, including *Myrmotherula assimilis* and *Schiffornis major*.

The presumed adult *Picumnus fuscus* that we observed had unmarked, mainly buff-coloured underparts, in contrast to the adult pictured on Plate 3 of Short (1982). Although the ventral pattern and preference for riverine forest would suggest a close relationship with *P. castelnau*, the vocalizations of *P. fuscus* clearly place it in a group with *P. exilis* and *P. aurifrons*. The very different trilled songs of *P. castelnau* are shared by the majority of *Picumnus* species, including all members of the *cirratu* group known to us (i.e. *minutissimus*, *dorbygnianus*, *steindachneri* and *temmincki*).

To our knowledge, this is the only bird species restricted to the Rio Guaporé drainage of Bolivia/Brazil. Short's (1982) inclusion of Dpto. Beni, Bolivia, in the range of *P. fuscus* is based on three previously unpublished specimens, one male and two females collected by Juan Cuello on the Bolivian side of the Rio Guaporé "frente a Costa Margues" on 30 August and 4 September 1964 (American Museum of Natural History nos. 791898-900; A. Capparella, *in litt.*).

*Picumnus fuscus* is in no way threatened by the deforestation occurring in other parts of southwestern Brazil, as the 500 km section of the Rio Guaporé from Pimenteiras to Guayaramerin is largely uninhabited and almost continuously forested along the river (pers. obs.). Furthermore, a large portion of the species' range apparently lies within the Reserva Biológica do Guaporé, Rondonia, Brazil.

Reference:

Short, L. L. 1982. *Woodpeckers of the World*. Delaware Mus. Nat. Hist., Monogr. Ser., no. 4.

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## Natural history notes and records for seven poorly known bird species from Amazonian Peru

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The goal of this article is to report new or additional data on the behaviour, natural history and distribution of seven poorly known bird species from Amazonian Peru. The majority of these records are from or near the Pakitza guard station in the Reserved Zone on the easterly boundary of Manu National Park, Department of Madre de Dios (11°57'S, 71°15'W), and near the Pithecia guard station (Cocha Shinguito) on the Samiria River of the Pacaya-Samiria National Reserve, Department of Loreto (5°S, 74°30'W). All specimens collected are housed in the Collection of Birds, Natural History Museum of San Marcos University, Lima, Peru.

### SOUTHERN SCREAMER *Chauna torquata*

On 7 September 1989 as we ascended the Madre de Dios River in canoes, an individual was observed on a sandy beach 12 km NW of the gold-mining settlement of San Francisco (c. 52 km NW Puerto Maldonado). Over 25 observers in the two canoes noted the reddish legs, white cheeks and throat, and overall greyish body that distinguished it from the larger,